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INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3561
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000226

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DEPT FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CR, S/CT, SCA/PAB, EUR/RPM
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/21/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: KARZAI OPENS PARLIAMENT'S SECOND YEAR

KABUL 00000226 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RONALD E. NEUMANN FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. SUMMARY: (C) On January 21, Parliament held its second annual inauguration ceremony. The President and parliamentary leadership reflected on accomplishments in 2006 in their speeches but said little about plans for the future. Karzai spoke on large themes -- security, corruption, education -- without specifics on implementation. The Speaker of the Lower House focused on a laundry list of topics, many dealing with internal personnel issues. The Deputy Speaker of the Upper House's shorter remarks explained the chamber's effort to organize itself over the past year; there were only a few sentences on its legislative work. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On January 21, the Parliament held its second annual inauguration ceremony, which was well attended by GOA and international community officials alike. The speeches given by President Karzai, Wolesi Jirga Speaker Yunus Qanooni, and Meshrano Jirga First Deputy Speaker Hamed Gailani were a reflection on what has been accomplished over last year. There was little about the Parliament's plans for the upcoming year, and the upcoming legislative agenda was not discussed.

¶3. (SBU) President Karzai spoke on large themes that affect the entire country such as security/terrorism, corruption, education, and health. He made broad comments about the need to do more work on each of these sectors without providing any specifics. Karzai noted that poppy needs to be eradicated by all means available, but stopped short of endorsing spraying as an approved method. He finished his speech by railing against Pakistani government officials for blaming Afghans "who live beyond the Durrand line" for the insurgency, and heralded the "peace councils" as an important tool that will help the GOP and GOA work together to eradicate terrorism.

¶4. (C) Wolesi Jirga Speaker Qanooni's rambling speech touched on everything from parliamentarians, salaries (they

need more) to the successful implementation of the heating system in the assembly room (even though it was not working during the inauguration ceremony). He spent a long time speaking about parliamentarians, need for more staff, cars, and higher salaries, and criticized the Finance Ministry for not approving the salary raise proposed by the Lower House. Qanooni also focused on the importance of providing oversight to the GOA's activities, and stressed that the National Assembly is simply fulfilling its mandate in providing this oversight, as opposed to playing partisan politics.

15. (SBU) Meshrano Jirga First Deputy Speaker Gailani spoke briefly in comparison to the other two, and spent his time explaining the efforts the upper house of Parliament made to establish and organize itself last year. (Note: Gailani seemed eager to finish his remarks as soon as possible to avoid the embarrassment of speaking while a steady stream of Parliamentarians walked off the Assembly floor. End Note).

COMMENT

16. (C) From an organizational perspective, the event itself was successful: protocol, security and general logistics for the event appeared to flow smoothly from start to finish. The large number of VIP guests were handled efficiently. However, the leadership's speeches were uninspiring. Televised nationally, the speeches were disappointing in the lack of insight they provided into plans for Parliament's second year. None of the speakers used the opportunity as a platform to announce their agendas or capitalize on the extensive media coverage that was given to the event, and Qanooni's emphasis on the MPs' salary demands seemed especially inappropriate. In its first year of work, the Afghan Parliament made tremendous strides and has become a focus of political life in the nation, but while Karzai, and

KABUL 00000226 002.2 OF 002

Qanooni gave long lists of accomplishments over the past year, neither seemed adept at separating what was truly praiseworthy from more mundane administrative matters. The second inauguration of Parliament was a missed opportunity to look to the future and rally the public and the MPs for the upcoming year's work. End comment.
NEUMANN